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Journal Title: *Polata Knigopisnaia*

Issue Date: August 1987

Publisher: William R. Veder, Vakgroep Slavistiek, Katholieke Universiteit, Postbus 9103, 6500 HD Nijmegen (Holland)

Citation: *Polata Knigopisnaia: an Information Bulletin Devoted to the Study of Early Slavic Books, Texts and Literatures* 16 (August 1987): 83-93, addendum page 152.

THE TRANSMISSION OF WYCLIFFITE TEXTS TO BOHEMIA

ANNE HUDSON

It is probably no exaggeration to say that between 1380 and 1425 the Englishman whose name was most widely known in Europe was John Wyclif. Throughout most of the continent his name was one to execrate; notoriety had begun about 1377 when pope Gregory XI issued several bulls condemning Wyclif's teaching, mentioning specifically his theories about dominion and the temporal possessions of the clergy,[1] and it culminated in 1415 with the formal condemnation by the Council of Constance of 260 tenets from Wyclif's writings, and with the Council's demand that Wyclif's bones should be exhumed from their grave in Lutterworth churchyard, burnt and the ashes scattered on the river.[2] Wyclif's primary heresy in the eyes of the clerical hierarchy by 1415 concerned the Eucharist: whilst not denying the Real Presence, Wyclif had disputed the contemporary explanations of transubstantiation, affirming that material bread and wine remained on the altar after the priest had pronounced the words of consecration.[3] In the censures on Wyclif from 1377 onwards other views are mentioned: Wyclif's theories of dominion, his arguments against the endowment of the church, against all forms of religious observance that could not be traced to explicit teaching in the gospels and epistles, and against clerical claims to worldly power.[4] As Wyclif saw it, the sole task of the clergy was the preaching of the gospel; the stress that he placed upon knowledge of the Bible led to the realisation, increasingly felt by his followers in England, that the vernacular language must become the primary mode of communication.[5] In England formal condemnation of Wyclif did not come until 1382.[6] Even after this he was allowed to reside apparently unmolested in his living at Lutterworth until his death on 31 December 1384, and to continue writing and revising earlier texts in increasingly polemical terms.[7] Pressure was, however, put on his disciples and on Oxford university, and a steadily growing number of proclamations against Wyclif's teachings and writings were issued both by the ecclesiastical and the secular authorities.[8] In 1401 the death penalty for heresy was for the first time introduced into England to combat the Lollards, as Wyclif's followers had come to be known; in 1409 archbishop Arundel issued a set of Constitutions designed to suppress unlicensed preachers, to control theological discussion

in the schools and to forbid vernacular translations of the scriptures;[9] in 1413–14 the abortive rising by Sir John Oldcastle, a Lollard, added treason to the charges that might be brought against the 'heretics'.[10] At the Council of Constance in 1415 the English delegates were amongst the most outspoken critics of their former countryman.

But the Council of Constance dealt, of course, with another and more dramatic case of heresy: on 6 July 1415 John Hus was burnt at the stake in Constance as an obstinate heretic and as a disciple of the heresiarch Wyclif.[11] Critics have been sharply divided about the magnitude of Hus's debt to Wyclif, many observing that Hus's most characteristic views came from the indigenous Bohemian reform movement that antedated knowledge of Wyclif's writings, and pointing out that Hus did not follow Wyclif into his heresy on the Eucharist.[12] But Hus quoted from Wyclif verbatim in many of his writings, and his veneration for the Englishman was often expressed.[13] And Hus was not alone in his esteem for Wyclif: the Hussites were often called in their native land *Wyclifistae*, and Wyclif, the *Doctor Evangelicus*, was exalted *super omnes evangelistas* and described as the fifth evangelist.[14] Whilst it is becoming increasingly clear that Wyclif's teaching remained influential in England right up to the Reformation, Wyclif's most apparent success in the sixty years after his death was far from his native land within the 'coasts of Bohemia'.[15]

Wyclif began teaching, in the usual late medieval pattern, as a philosopher. His outlook in most of the surviving works was one of extreme realism against the prevailing nominalism of fourteenth-century thought.[16] It seems that in Bohemia this unusual standpoint brought an unexpected advantage. The dominant ethnic group at the Charles University in Prague were the Germans who were for the most part confirmed nominalists. The adoption by the Czechs of Wyclif's realism was evidently the more ardent because it demonstrated their hostility to the Germans.[17] The earliest clear evidence for awareness of Wyclif in Prague that has so far come to light certainly antedates Wyclif's death, though its precise date is unclear. In an introduction to the commentary on the second book of the Lombard's *Sentences* the Prague master Nicholas Biceps attacked the views of FitzRalph and Wyclif, both mentioned by name, on the impossibility of annihilation that 'they do not think it inconvenient that God cannot annihilate a creature so that it should cease to be in itself and in any part of itself, because of the idea of it that is inherent in God.' A copy of this prologue appears in a Munich manuscript dated by the scribe 1381; since the date is that of copying, the lectures

on which the text was based must be earlier, perhaps several years earlier.[18] The view attacked is a significant one, since it is a philosophical position which, if not the starting point of Wyclif's Eucharistic heresy, was used by him to back up his views on the subject; yet it was only in 1380 or possibly 1379 that Wyclif was induced to set out those heretical Eucharistic notions fully.[19] Nicholas's immediate opponent was Conrad of Soltau, and the wording makes it clear that he supported Wyclif's views, thus showing more than one individual's knowledge of them.

Accounts of the transmission of Wyclif's works to Bohemia have made much of the evidence for contact between England and Bohemia in the last decades of the fourteenth century and the first of the fifteenth. The marriage of Richard II to Anne of Bohemia in January 1382 was preceded by negotiations between the two countries, and Anne's arrival in England doubtless brought a number of clerics as well as courtiers.[20] But this alone would not explain Nicholas Bičep's awareness of Wyclif's ideas. The career of Adalbert Rankonis of Ericinio, however, is more relevant from the chronological point of view: Adalbert studied in Oxford between about 1360 and 1366. Though his writings do not reveal any mention of Wyclif or clear influence of his thought, he could have heard Wyclif's lectures on philosophical topics. Unfortunately Adalbert's will which provided money to send students to study philosophy in Paris or Oxford is too late to explain the earliest information about Wyclif in Prague since he died in August 1388.[21] But Adalbert had been in Paris for some years between about 1345 and 1359, and it is possible that Paris may have been the vital link between Oxford and Prague in the early spread of Wyclif's views. A French manuscript (now Paris BN lat. 15869) contains, as well as the complete first book of Wyclif's *De Civili Dominio* and extracts from its third book and from his *De Mandatis*, a record that a debate about Wyclif's doctrine of dominion occurred at Paris on 16 January 1381. The association of Paris with Oxford is documented by the 1367 statutes of the Charles University, where it is provided that only texts emanating from those universities or from Prague itself could be dictated for copying by students, and that bachelors must confine their comments to the *dicta* of such masters.[22]

There are also two well-known visits by Czech scholars to Oxford later in the relevant period. Jerome of Prague seems to have come direct and not through Paris in 1398; he is known to have taken back with him copies of Wyclif's *Dialogus and Trialogus*, the first a rambling treatment of some of Wyclif's more extreme views, the second a much more succinct review of his teaching in its most radical form.[23] These copies do not survive; that

made by two later visitors, however, does. The manuscript (now Osterreichische Nationalbibliothek 1294) contains texts of Wyclif's *De Veritate Sacre Scripture*, *De Ecclesia* and *De Dominio Divino* written by Nicholas Faulfiš and Jiří of Kněhnice in 1407; the first and last of these had been copied at Braybrooke in Northamptonshire (the home previously of Sir Thomas Latimer, one of the so-called Lollard knights), the second at Kemerton in Gloucestershire (where the living was held by Robert Lychlade, expelled from Oxford in 1395 for teaching heretical views), and the texts had been corrected in Oxford.[24] As well as this surviving manuscript, the two Czechs took back with them a letter that purported to express the support of the University of Oxford for Wyclif and for his Prague followers (a letter that seems to have been pushed through congregation in the depths of the long vacation by Peter Payne, a Wycliffite whose name appears again later in the story), and a chip from Wyclif's tombstone, later inappropriately revered in Prague as a relic.[25] It seems possible, however, that these stories should be taken as paradigmatic: they certainly testify to the regard in which Wyclif was held in Prague, but the MSS involved in them are not clearly important for the transmission of Wyclif's writings. The later Bohemian copies of the *De Ecclesia* and the *De Dominio Divino* do not all derive from the same branch of the stemma as Vienna 1294, and it cannot be regarded as certain that that copy, or the copies of the other three works mentioned, was the first manuscript of the works to reach Prague. From the surviving manuscripts it is clear that Wyclif's philosophical writings were available by 1405.[26] The *De Mandatis*, *De Symonia* and *De Eucharistia* survive in dated manuscripts from before 1407; from Thomson's recently published catalogue it emerges that almost all of Wyclif's texts were available in Bohemian manuscripts datable on paleographical grounds to c. 1410.[27]

It is in the light of this evidence that the importance of Peter Payne's arrival in Prague must be assessed. Payne began his studies in Oxford about 1398-1400, and hence could not have known Wyclif himself. By his own confession he encountered the heretic's views when a student and we know that soon after 1400 was anxious to promote them. He continued to do so up to about 1413, mainly in Oxford, despite the provisions of Arundel's Constitutions. He was called before a committee in 1410 to answer questions about his orthodoxy, but seems to have been able to evade condemnation. In the aftermath of the Oldcastle rebellion, however, it seems that he was more seriously under suspicion. The only record of his views comes from his

responses in 1433 to allegations made against him at the Council of Basel. It would appear that in late 1413 or 1414 Payne judged it prudent to leave England. He reached Prague probably in early 1415, but after Hus had left for the Council of Constance under the treacherous safe conduct. Thereafter Payne appears with fair frequency in Hussite history, often under the name Peter Engliš.[28] His name has been associated with the indexes to Wyclif's works that appear in a number of Bohemian manuscripts; though a colophon certainly connects three of them with Payne, it is not clear that all were his work and the idea certainly antedated him.[29] Again it may be suspected that knowledge of the name may have led scholars to attach more significance than is warranted to Payne in the transmission of Wycliffite material to Bohemia.

So far only texts by Wyclif himself have been considered. But the writings of Wyclif's English followers were also taken to Bohemia. Not surprisingly, with the exception of a refrain in English in a poem concerning the 1382 Blackfriars' Council that condemned Wyclif,[30] all the material that was exported was in Latin. But the preservation of the refrain is interesting. It reproduces the original language with surprisingly few corruptions a fidelity which is as notable as the rarity with which texts of English origin were altered to fit the differing interests and concerns of their new central European home. A short text, now only found in one Prague and two Vienna manuscripts, but not at all in England, sets out to demonstrate that it is the duty of a secular lord to punish erring clerics. The argument is conducted through an analysis of the clauses in the coronation oath sworn by Richard II of England an analysis which, one would think, could have had little force in Prague. The author is said to have been *discipulus ... Doctoris Evangelici*, his viewpoint is Wycliffite, and otherwise the three manuscripts contain entirely Wyclif's own works.[31]

A more striking case is that of the commentary on the Apocalypse known from its opening words as the *Opus Arduum*, again a text that does not survive now in England or in manuscripts of English copying. The commentary was written between Christmas 1389 and Easter 1390 by an anonym imprisoned in England by the bishops because of his support for unpalatable doctrines, doctrines shown by the text to have been distinctively Wycliffite. The biblical text provides the author with ample opportunities for an apocalyptical analysis of his own time, and there are a number of references to events in England in the 1380s, to the disastrous Despenser crusade to the Low Countries in 1383, to the persecution of men of awkward views by

the ecclesiastical hierarchy and to the consequent destruction of books 'in Oxford and Salisbury'. Infuriatingly the author conceals his own name, but his position as a man of university education, as well as a Wycliffite, is clear. Without a critical edition of the work, it is impossible to be certain how faithful all the continental manuscripts of it are to the original intentions of the author. But a check on the details of English concern in the text throughout all the manuscripts, details that would be most likely to be changed, shows remarkable conservatism even in the manuscripts that had abbreviated the text. English place or personal names are sometimes mangled, though rarely to such an extent as to obscure the name intended, but there seems to be no attempt to alter the details about persecution, for example, to accord with actuality in Bohemia rather than in in England.[32] The extent to which the text interested the Hussites is shown by the survival of a fragment of a Czech translation of it, and its use by various Bohemian preachers and commentators.[33]

The *Opus Arduum* was known in Prague by 1415, in which year a surviving copy (now Brno University Library Mk 28) was taken down from the dictation of Martin of Verona, who had himself copied it from the formal dictation of Matthias Engliš. Matthias, despite his name, was not of English origin: he appears in a number of Hussite documents under this title and under the name of Matthias of Hnatnice. Between 1424 and 1440 he was apparently engaged in various Hussite missions. As well as the *Opus Arduum*, he dictated Grosseteste's *Dicta* (a work often quoted by Wyclif and his followers) in 1414, and in 1417 the Wycliffite *Rosarium*. Unfortunately the colophons, though they specify Matthias's activity, do not reveal where he obtained his texts.[34] Matthias certainly knew Nicholas Faulfiš: in 1409 he lent Faulfiš money, and attempted to recover it on his death two years later.[35] But it is not clear whether he obtained the Wycliffite texts from Faulfiš, or had visited England and had obtained them there, or had received them from another traveller. His by-name, however, may be indicative of his preoccupation with matters English.

The *Rosarium* is a less interesting text than those I have discussed so far, but its role in transmitting Wycliffite viewpoints was perhaps more crucial. It is a shortened version of another text, the *Floretum*, also found in numerous Hussite copies. Both are alphabetical collections of *distinctiones*, using doctrinal, ethical and ecclesiastical topics to organize extracts from the Bible, the fathers, canon law and, less frequently, later medieval writers; the sources of all quotations are minutely

specified. The Wycliffite basis of the *Floretum* and *Rosarium* is evident from the inclusion in both of numerous, and often lengthy quotations from Wyclif.[36] Unlike the *Opus Arduum* both these compilations do survive in England, and there is a single manuscript of an English translation of the *Rosarium*.[37] The compilation was made between 1384 and 1396; the *Floretum* was available in Prague by 1413, the *Rosarium* by 1417, the dates of the earliest manuscripts with colophons. Again without a full textual study, the extent of Hussite modification is unclear, but it does appear that two extra sections were added to the entry for *Eucharistia* to incorporate the views of utraquists. In England these two compilations were widely used by Wycliffite writers as a source of authorities to support their views, and even as a constructional model for sermons.[38] Whether they were similarly used in Hussite writings remains to be investigated.

So far discussion has concerned the transmission of texts. How far was the ideological traffic accompanied by more direct information about the fate of the Wycliffite movement and its adherents in England? Peter Payne is the best known refugee, and he did not arrive before 1415. Of Wyclif's earliest Oxford followers, Nicholas Hereford, Philip Repingdon, or John Aston there is no clear trace in Bohemia. Two notable English Wycliffites are known to have corresponded with the Hussites. Richard Wyche, a Lollard since at least 1401, sent a letter of encouragement to Hus in 1410; he appears also to have heard of Jakoubek of Stříbro. Hus in his reply explained how he had told his congregation of the letter, and of the concern of a distant Wycliffite for their salvation; he mentions gifts that accompanied the letter, but unfortunately does not say whether these were books. Sir John Oldcastle sent a second letter, dated the same day as Wyche's, to king Wencelas's courtier Voksa of Valdstejn, urging him to remain steadfast in the faith and its 'true promulgators'.[39] In the same year a Scottish knight, Quintin Folkhyrde, sent four epistles to Bohemia describing the deplorable state of the church establishment in Scotland, and declaring his support for attempts to reform it.[40] How many other refugees took the same path as Payne is unclear. It is tempting to add at least one name, that of William Thorpe. The temptation arises from the fact that two copies of - Latin version of an autobiographical account of his trial in 1407 before archbishop Arundel are found in Bohemian manuscripts.[41] Thorpe's career up to that point is traceable: he had learnt his heresy in Oxford, had preached for some time in London and there been investigated by the bishop but escaped condemnation, and had before his trial by Arundel been teaching in Shrewsbury. In his

account Thorpe appears entirely resolute in his Wycliffite views. After 1407 nothing further is known of him. The distribution of the manuscript might be explained by Thorpe's emigration. This seems to be confirmed by the existence in a Prague manuscript of a list of opinions on the Eucharist noted in the margin as being those of *Wylhelmi Torp cuius librum ego habeo.*[42] Again, Thorpe's autobiography appears in Bohemia in impeccably Wycliffite surroundings, English names and affairs are transmitted with surprising faithfulness; only two additions of *et calix* to discussions of the Eucharist give away Hussite concerns.

The texts which travelled from England to Bohemia were well cherished in their new home, better far than they were in their native land: of Wyclif's works a good half no longer survive in manuscripts in England, and this applies to some of his most important writings such as the *Trialogus*, the *De Eucharistia* and the complete *De Civili Dominio*. Few books, or Hussites seem to have travelled in the opposite direction after 1407. Paul of Kravař, condemned in 1433 far from his native home in St Andrew's, was the most notable.[43] But Wycliffite inheritance eventually returned: in 1528 an abbreviated version of the *Opus Arduum* was issued from Wittemberg with a preface claimed to be by Luther. The preface recognized the fourteenth-century origins of the text, but missed the indications, clear even in the shortened form of the text, that it derived from England. This 1528 edition was known to John Bale, with whom the historiography of both the Wycliffite movement and, to lesser extent, the Hussite movement in England, may be said to have begun.*

* This paper was given in July 1984. In 1985 Frantisek Šmahel's *La revolution hussite, une anomalie historique* (Essais et conferences, College de France, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris) was published. This important review of the Hussite movement contains numerous references to recently published Czech studies.

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Title 2: Addendum to A. Hudson. *The Transmission of Wycliffite Texts to Bohemia*, p. 83-93.

Journal Title: *Polata Knigopisnaia*

Issue Date: August 1987

Publisher: William R. Veder, Vakgroep Slavistiek, Katholieke Universiteit, Postbus 9103, 6500 HD Nijmegen (Holland)

Citation: *Polata Knigopisnaia: an Information Bulletin Devoted to the Study of Early Slavic Books, Texts and Literatures* 16 (August 1987): 152.

ADDENDUM

to H. Keipert. *Der Fremdsprachenunterricht in der Frühzeit des Petersburger Akademiegymnasiums*, p.68-82:

Vgl. zum Thema jetzt auch H. Keipert. *Cerullarius in Russland.* 'Russian Linguistics' (im Druck).

ADDENDUM

to A. Hudson. *The Transmission of Wycliffite Texts to Bohemia*p.83-93:

This paper was given in July 1984. In 1985 appeared the study by F. SMAHEL. *La révolution hussite, une anomalie historique*. Paris (Essais et conférences, Collège de France) Presses universitaires de France. As well as giving an important new review of the Hussite movement, the study provides some indication of the large amount of recent research into the period which has been published in Czech sources and was not available to me.